

Parents and role models create "teachable moments" by turning ordinary situations — like eating dinner or watching TV — into an opportunity to talk with kids about making good life choices.

Before kids face situations involving alcohol or drugs, make sure they have the facts. Use "teachable moments" to talk to your kids, even when a child is 8 or 10 years old, before they get the wrong information from their peers.

#### Think Like a Kid

Kids are naturally curious. But a lot of drug education focuses on "just say no" without explaining how drugs can affect someone's life.

#### Remember:

- Many kids don't see themselves using drugs in the future.
- Kids want the facts on why people do drugs and how drugs affect them.
- Kids need a safe space to talk about drugs and a way to get help without getting in trouble.

#### Start an Open Dialogue

A lot of kids don't know where to turn with questions. Their families and peers can also have a lot of influence on their behavior. Assure them they can come to you if they or someone they know needs help.

- Be truthful about why some people use drugs and why some are legal.
- Share real stories without judgment.
- Focus on the consequences of drug use, both to physical health and life goals.
- Express your opinions on drug use and how you disapprove of it or don't like it.

## **Share** the Facts

Use the Teachable Moments fact sheets found at **drugfreetexas.org** to provide kids with current and scientific information on different drugs.

More general facts you can share:

- The majority of teens do not use drugs.
- Some people use drugs to cope with stress, fight boredom or take a risk.
- Drugs can cause permanent damage to growing brains.
- Some drugs are worse than others, but all drugs can have negative effects.
- Because drugs affect people in different ways, if you know someone who used drugs with no negative effects, it doesn't mean your experience will be the same.

#### Ways to Prevent Drug and Alcohol Use

Teens face a lot of pressure to do well in school, prepare for their futures and deal with complicated social situations. They might take drugs to fit in, feel better, improve class performance or just experiment. But youth who learn about drugs from their parents are 50 percent less likely to try illegal substances.

- Starting when they are young, help your child learn to make good choices, even if they have to go against what their peers are doing.
- Make sure your child knows your house rules for drug use and what would happen if they broke them.
- As they get older, build self-confidence and reduce stress by teaching time management, goal setting and healthy habits (sleeping enough, eating nutritious foods, getting exercise and discussing problems).
- Help them find safe ways to fight boredom or create excitement.



### Signs of Drug Use

If you see any of the following signs, talk to your child.

- · Changes in behavior, mood or weight
- · Difficulty remembering things
- Worsening relationships with friends and family or changes in peer group
- Drop in academic performance, skipping classes or getting into trouble at school
- Losing interest in favorite activities, such as sports or music
- Changes in sleeping habits

Different drugs might have more specific signs of use. See fact sheets at **drugfreetexas.org** to learn more.

# Other factors that can influence drug use:

Teens often get alcohol and other drugs through peers, family or the internet. Fewer ways to get them means less use.

Teens who have dinner with their family at least five times a week are less likely to smoke, drink or use marijuana.

Children who are motivated with after-school lessons, job training or other goal-orientated activities use fewer drugs.

#### Contact your local Prevention Resource Center to learn more: hhs.texas.gov/prevention-resource-centers

Sources: Substance Use Prevention for Adolescents: The Icelandic Model • Texas Health and Human Services Commission Center on Addiction • American Psychological Association • Partnership for Drug-Free Kids • American Academy of Pediatrics National Institute on Drug Abuse • Nemours Foundation

